

H. R. Seale Eng

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN.

ITS PRESENT POSITION

AND

Future Prospects.

W. H. P.

The logo features the word "Gratf" in a stylized, gothic-style font, enclosed within a square border with rounded corners.

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Future Prospects.

BY ALFRED BRUNSON.

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THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF

STATISTICS

BY



PRAIRIE DU CHIEN.

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ITS PRESENT POSITION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS.

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Although this place has been known in both Europe and America for a century or more, as an *Indian trading and military post*, it has not attracted much attention as a *commercial point* until within a few months past, or since it was made the terminus of the Milwaukee & Mississippi Rail Road.

Other points above us, on the river, of less natural beauty and advantages, having fallen into the hands of enterprising speculators who had the tact and ability to puff and magnify their town sites into great importance, and had the good fortune to draw emigration to them, as the Eldorado of the great North West; and in some instances the gassing of other places has been done at the expense of this—greatly to our damage—no one here feeling disposed to call attention to this place by such means; and especially as all who visited the place could see at a glance both its natural beauty and its *commercial* advantages. Nor is it now intended to resort to means of doubtful morality to entice the emigrant to a settlement here. But as the Rail Road has called the place into notice, and some of us are constantly receiving letters of inquiry as to our present position and future prospects, it is deemed proper to publish, in pamphlet form, answers to such inquiries, and to do it in such a manner that the intelligent emigrant may find, on examination, that the reality exceeds the description.

In the attempt to gas up other places into notoriety at our expense, it has been said that the site of this town was a *marsh*, and could never be built upon: while the truth is, we are on a dry sand prairie, with an average of twenty feet above the highest water ever known since Noah's flood, at the subsiding of which, it is sup-

posed, this plain was left in the nature and position of a sand bar, and vegetation growing and decaying upon it, a vegetable mould has been formed and mingled with the surface to the depth of from one to two feet, which, with the wash from the bluffs of loam, makes it productive for gardens, unless affected by *extreme* drouth.

Another objection raised to the place is, that it has been a century or more inhabited, but has never grown to any thing more than a trading and military post, and these now being removed, there is nothing left but the ruins of a few old buildings of original Canadian French model, while other and less inviting places by nature have grown, alias, been puffed, into an importance which it is doubtful whether they will long sustain.

The truth in this matter is, the Indian title to the surrounding country was not extinguished until the years 1837-8, the same years that the whole country north of the Wisconsin river and east of the Mississippi as far up as the mouth of Crow Wing river, was purchased. While the adjoining country was shut out from settlement, of course, the town could not grow to any thing more than what it was. We, therefore, claim to date back our proper origin, in the present order of things, no farther than to the year above named, and, of course, the town is *really* no older than others which have grown up on the same purchased district, and the difference in growth was owing entirely to the different means used by their respective proprietors to bring them into notice.

THE SITE OF THE TOWN.

The prairie on which the town is laid out and being built, as we have said, is a sand and loam plain, about two miles wide at the South end, near the depot of the railroad, and running North seven miles to a point, and contains about seven sections of land. The town site stretches along the river (Mississippi), about two miles; nearly all of which affords steam boat landing; and averages about one and a half miles in width, east and west.

It is situated on the east bank of the river, from three to five miles above the mouth of the Wisconsin river; 300 miles below St. Paul in Minnesota; 70 above Dunlieth and Dubuque; 600

above St. Louis, and 1800 from New Orleans; and is accessible to steamboats during the season of navigation, which averages about *eight* months of the year.

The site of the town is nearly a dead level, and will require but little grading; the streets are laid mostly at right angles, the blocks being of convenient size, and every lot may have a well of the purest water. The river is a mile and a quarter wide at this point, including Islands; the whole valley from bluff to bluff is about three miles wide, and the towering hills, covered with grass and scattering timber, with here and there precipitous rocks cropping out in bold relief, all these surrounding and environing one of the most beautiful prairies the eye of man ever beheld, gives the whole scenery a most charming and romantic appearance.

But what gives the place the more importance, in a *commercial* point of view, is the fact that it is the terminus of the M. & M. R. R. which the cars are expected to reach in Feb. 1857. It is the most northerly point at which a Rail Road touches the Mississippi, with 420 miles of navigation above, and it must be many years before the iron horse can reach this river at any point north of us.

ITS ADVANTAGES.

This point, at the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi valleys, being selected by the Indians for their common neutral ground, upon which their tribes, though at war at home, could meet and trade and play, in perfect safety; and being also selected by the early traders as the emporium of their out-fits and their general rendezvous, was so selected not only from its natural beauty, which exceeds any other point from Rock Island to St Anthony's Falls, but more especially from its central position and natural advantages; and such selections by such persons, who were familiar with the whole country, have always been considered a favorable omen.

The valley of the Wisconsin river; though of great use and importance to the early fur trade, and to more modern commerce, is yet of vastly more importance to the world of trade for a Railroad than for the navigation of its waters.

It is well known that while the margin of the great lakes, and the country half way to the great river is comparatively level, and Rail Roads can be laid in almost any direction, yet the western part of this State and of the State south of us, rises into high ridges, which, near the river, tower up to from 400 to 700 feet above the river. It is said that the Rail Road from Galena to Chicago rises 700 feet in reaching Scale's Mound, 14 miles, some part of the grade of which is 80 or 90 feet to the mile. This, aside from the danger from grade, short curves and high embankments, must necessarily cause slow travelling; and twice the writer of this has been two hours in going from Dunlieth to that mound on the cars, 29 miles.

But the M. & M. R. R. by entering the valley of the Wisconsin through a natural gap in the ridge at the head of Black Earth, and then descending that valley at a minimum grade of two feet to the mile, and having but slight curves, and 35 miles without any curve, the travel must be with greater speed and more safety. This valley affords the only route for a Rail Road, with such advantages, between Rock Island and Lake Superior; and this gives to Prairie du Chien an important advantage over any and every other point as a commercial emporium and for travel for 500 miles below St. Paul. And the teeming thousands of emigrants from the eastern hives of enterprise and ambition, will naturally seek and prefer this route to the attractive and fast settling North West, and for the conveyance of the surplus products of their prolific soil to the Atlantic cities. It must command the most of the trade and travel to and from North Western Wisconsin, all of Minnesota and a large portion of Northern Iowa, all of which will soon be densely populated by the most enterprising, stirring and industrious of our American people.

From McGregor, directly opposite the Depot of the Rail Road, and distant one and a fourth miles, a Rail Road is now being surveyed, and to be commenced forthwith, leading directly west to the Missouri river, and eventually to connect with the great Pacific road in the Platte valley, and another from the same place by

Decora to the south bend of Minnesota river, and thence to St. Paul. This is also to be commenced immediately.

In addition to this, a Rail Road has been chartered from Prairie du Chien directly along the east bank of the river to Lake Pepin, and thence to Hudson on the St. Croix, to connect with one from Hudson to the head of Lake Superior.

Thus we have the river for 300 miles to St. Paul, and 120 more up the Minnesota, and 70 miles below us ; and we shall soon have three Rail Roads, each about 300 miles long, all pointing to this place, to connect with the Rail Road leading from hence to Madison and Milwaukee by one route, and to Madison, Janesville and Chicago by another, both connecting with Rail Roads running North, South and East, and with the Lakes ; so that trade and travel to and from the North and West of this, must, in the nature of things, concentrate at this point, by which time and expense will be saved.

To see this in the most unequivocal light, we have only to view the facts in the case. Passengers and freight taking the cars at this place, can reach Milwaukee or Chicago, as soon as they could reach Dunleith by the river. Cars leaving this place at the same time the cars leave Dunleith, will reach Chicago as soon, owing to the difference of grade, curve, &c., in favor of our road ; the difference in the distance being not to exceed forty miles.

Freight and passengers coming up the Lakes, and destined to points North and West of this will, by landing at Milwaukee and taking the Railroad to this place, save 90 miles, or 9 hours of Lake navigation ; will save at least two hours of time on this over the other Rail Roads, owing to the superiority of the Road in grade and curve ; and then save 70 miles, or ten hours of river navigation from Dunleith to this place. This makes a saving of 160 miles, and 28 hours, with the expenses attending ; and the same saving of distance, time and expense will be made in going from the North-West to the East, by the same route.

From Chicago to Dunleith is about 190 miles ; from Chicago to Prairie du Chien, by the rails, is about 230, making but 40 miles difference. But when we add 70 miles of river travel from Dun-

leith to this place, the difference in distance turns 30 miles the other way. But as the cars from Chicago, for the reason above given, can reach this place as soon as they could reach Dunleith, the passenger gains 70 miles, or 10 hours of river travel, and the fare, by taking the cars for this place instead of the other. From all these considerations it is reasonable to suppose that Prairie du Chien must be an important, if not one of the *most* important points for trade and travel between the East and the North-West.

Another advantage this place has, lies in the facility with which emigrants and other travellers can cross this "Father of Waters." It is well known, and a subject of frequent remark by travellers on the river, that "the Mississippi is full of Islands"; in consequence thereof, there are but few places where one can see across it, from dry land to dry land, and, as a consequence, Ferries have to be, in most places, from three to five, and in some instances ten miles up and down the river, in time of high water. But at this place we have two steam ferries, on the shortest and most direct route; one of which will extend its benefits to Yellow River and Paint Creek.

A bridge soon to be completed over the Wisconsin River, will facilitate trade and travel from that direction. The principal roads leading to and from this place, the great thoroughfares for wagons, stages, etc., are of a superior quality by nature, being high and dry ridges. In the direction of Madison we have 70 miles of such ridge, on which the old military road was laid; to the North-East we have 120 miles of similar ridge, and to the West, from McGregor, 50 miles, and verging to the North-West into Minnesota, 100 miles; and these roads branch off in every direction; and as the country is mostly prairie and open timber land, the roads are seldom much affected by rains, and especially when on high grounds.

OUR PRESENT POSITION.

The Town Plat, as we have said, lies two miles along the river, and runs back one and a half miles, on an average, covering an area of about three sections. But the present inhabitants, numbering about 3,000, are scattered over the equivalent of seven sec-

tions, all of which can, and probably will, be occupied for dwellings and business in a few years.

We have one large steam flouring, and one steam saw mill: we have three lumber yards: five brick yards: four lime kilns, and stone quarries without number. Several millions of brick have been made and laid up during the past season, in dwellings and large stores and ware houses. And by the aid of furnaces brick are being made during the winter at the rate of 3000 per day, and will be ready to be laid up as soon as the ensuing spring opens.

Three graceful churches, and one in the course of building, together with two other places of divine worship, honor the morals and religious tastes of the people. A High School, and suitable number of district schools supply the wants of our children and youths for educational purposes; and an Academy and several more churches are in contemplation.

We have several lines of daily, tri-weekly and weekly stages, plying in Wisconsin, and the same from McGregor—which may be considered as a part of this place—plying in Iowa and Minnesota, all centering to this place, in view of the Rail Road and steam boat travel.

The Rail Road is at the time of this writing, finished up to a point of 20 miles from this place, and the track is being laid at the rate of half a mile a day. The grading and bridge building keep out of the way of the rail layers, and the cars are expected to reach this place in February next.

During the past season the steam boat arrivals have averaged ten or twelve a day, none of which were owned at this place.—But arrangements are now being made by which four freight boats are to be put on in connection with the Rail Road, and also four daily boats expressly for passengers, to receive the passengers from the trains, and go at a speed never yet attained on this river, and ply between this place and St. Paul, and the intermediate ports. By this arrangement freight will not be permitted to lie at the Depot for weeks before it will be forwarded: and passengers will not be left without beds nor be compelled to hang upon the guards to get a passage, as it has been to some extent the past season or two:

one of the boats of the greatest of speed is to ply between this place and Dubuque, daily.

This place offers at this time, the greatest facilities for wholesale dealers, for manufactories, and for all kinds of mechanics and laborers. This may be seen at a glance from our position. The town site is ample for buildings without the expense of grading, piling or wharfing, and the facilities for receiving and sending out goods, wares and merchandize are exceeded by no place west or north of Chicago.

Hundreds of buildings would have now been up and occupied by families and traders, if materials and men could have been at command. And as soon as these can be obtained building will progress with great rapidity. Hence the opening for mechanics, lumber, and other materials for building.

A foundry on a large scale is very much needed. Buildings with iron fronts are being put up, and stoves by the hundred are being sold, mill irons are in great demand for all the country about us various kinds of machinery are being erected, and for all these and every other kind of castings, we are under the necessity of sending below, while we have within 100 miles of us, at and near the Falls of Black River, iron ore enough to supply the entire North West with that material, which could be easily and cheaply floated down the current to this place, and strong indications of iron ore are abundant within 20 miles of us.

Manies of all kinds and descriptions find ample employment; laborers are in great demand, and all at the highest wages, say from \$1,50 to \$3,00, and in the opening of next spring far greater numbers of them will be required to supply the demand. Several large wholesale and retail stores, commisson and forwarding houses, besides numerous dwellings were the last season added to our former stock; and these will be greatly increased in the coming year, together with several new and spacious Hotels and the Depot buildings, now partly up.

The manufacturing of Plows, Chairs, Carriages, Furniture, Book binding, etc., would find every encouragement; Planing, Turning and other useful machinery will find ample employment. An ad-

ditional printing press is much wanted and would find a good support.

Enterprising Farmers and Dairy men are in great requisition; and a better country for them the sun never shone upon. Butter, Cheese, Eggs, Beef, Pork, Poultry, &c., and all kinds of garden vegetables are in great demand, and in the coming season will be more so.

Flouring, Grist, and Saw Mills are much needed, and good sites both for water and steam power are abundant; and for a grist mill by water power near the town, a good mill wright and Miller would find good encouragement from the present proprietor.

It is expected that in the coming season and to increase as time rolls on, from 500 to 1000 people will arrive and depart daily, but at present our Hotels, though of a good quality, could not entertain more than 150 comfortably; hence the call for more accommodations of this kind.

The health of the place, though it has been greatly misrepresented by those whose interest it was to do so, we affirm to be generally good; fully equal to any other on the river, and far superior to any place below us. We have had no sickness except what was common to the country, and even at that not as much as many other places reputed to be healthy. In all the ravages of the cholera not a single case *originated* here. Visitors to the place, who were looking for a future home, have been to our cemeteries and finding so few new graves in a population of some 3000 have come to the sage conclusion that comparatively but few die among us, and on enquiry have found that they were mostly from causes common to human nature, and not from any *local* cause particularly.

OF THE FUTURE

We deem it prudent to say but little. We do not claim to be prophets, nor possess the attributes of fore-knowledge. The intelligent reader can draw his conclusions from the foregoing facts, as satisfactorily to himself as if done by ourselves. The growth of the West, though a fixed fact, can hardly be appreciated, except from actual observation. The unprecedented growth of Milwaukee and

Chicago is known to be owing to their position and local advantages; and the principal purchasers of real estate among us are from those places, who, viewing our prospects of rapid growth from the same cause as theirs, have paid and fixed upon prices for lots corresponding with prices with them when they were about of our present dimensions; and though those who wish to purchase for speculation, as would be natural for them to do, talk as if our prices were too high—that is, too high for them to expect the advance they would *like* to receive—yet, if they become owners, relate nothing in their high estimate of the value of their lots. But the fact that business men from such places are purchasing, building and removing their families to settle among us; and the fact that business men of the highest character for enterprise and foresight from Buffalo, New York, and other Eastern cities are also coming purchasing and settling among us, are favorable omens of the magnitude of our future position, in a commercial point of view. We are at this time ahead of what Milwaukee and Chicago were years ago, and having advantages to start upon that neither of them had at that time, it is not deemed visionary to suppose that in less than 20 years we shall be equal to what they are now.

The above was read and adopted by a large and respectable meeting of the business men of the place, held at the Monmouth House, December 10th, 1856, and is published at their request.

ALFRED BRUNSON.

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